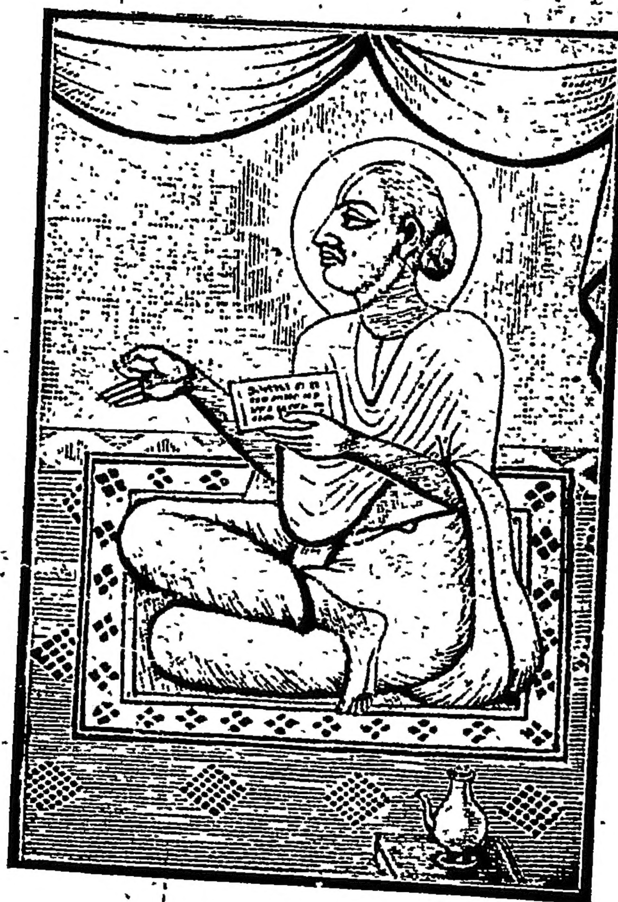
VALLABHACHARYA

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS



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VALLABHACHARYA

(1479—1531)

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AMONG the several sects that arose in Mediæval India, none has spread more widely or attracted more popular attention both in India and outside it than the one connected with the name and teachings of Vallabhacharya. A native of the Telugu country, a great Sanskrit scholar, Vallabhacharya was a South Indian missionary who settled at first at Muttra and then at Benares and preached with great ardour and learning the Vaishnavite cult and philosophy. He made a tour through the whole of India in the manner of other mediæval reformers and won fame and following in several disputations in various cities. The discovery of an image of Krishna in the Govardhana Hill and its due installation in a temple therein brought him additional fame, but it did not interfere with his life of study and preaching and writing commentaries which he carried on surrounded by the few disciples that had gathered round him. He closed his days at Benares at the age of fifty-two. The energy

and enthusiasm of his descendants—two sons and seven grandsons, one of the latter, Gokulnath by name, being more eminent than the rest—however gave the new cult and religion wide currency and popularity throughout the countries of Rajasthan and Guzerat. Following perhaps in the wake of Akbar's conquests in the 16th century which had laid low the proud nobles and soldiers of Rajasthan, Gokulnath converted them all to his faith, and they soon hastened to build shrines and *maths* to Krishna and their Guru and endow them with lands and revenues.

THE EARLIER VAISHNAVISM OF RAJASTHAN AND GUZERAT

Before we proceed with the story of Vallabha's life and sect, we may look a little at the earlier phase of Vaishnavism that had prevailed in Rajasthan and Guzerat before the advent of Vallabha's descendants, and to some extent paved the way for their startling success. Two great names are associated with this earlier phase—Narsi Mehta, the Brahmin bard of Guzerat (1415-1481 A.D.), and Mira Bai (1504-1550), the Rajput Queen and mystic. We may include with these the famous Sur Das, the blind bard of Agra (flourished 15th century), though Mr. G. A. Grierson seems to place him

among Vallabha's followers. (Imp. Gaz. of India Vol. II).

NARSI MEHTA

Narsi Mehta was born in 1415 A.D. at Talaja in Kathiawar. He was by caste a Nagar Brahmin; but unlike most of his caste, he seems to have been a lazy dreamy boy and would have nothing to do with ordinary books of useful learning. He was not, as all good Nagars should be, a "penman, an epicure or a fighter"; he lived to worship and sing the praises of God. He never condescended to marry; and, after his father's death, lived with his brother at Junagadh. A little family incident—the unkindness of his brother's wife—determined his career and sent him in quest of God. At first Narsi Mehta seems to have given himself to the worship of Siva; but, it is said, a miraculous incident led him to the worship of Krishna which was the religion of his latter life and poems.

After his adoption of the Krishna faith, Narsi Mehta began to compose exceedingly sweet and devotional songs which are even now popular, and sung in every household in Guzerat. Krishna's grace, sang the seventeenth-century biographer of Narsi Mehta, "made Narsi's language pure and increased his talent for devotional poetry infinitely."

The devout and mystic poet was not allowed however to lead a peaceful life. His castemen often persecuted him and the climax was reached when the devout and poor saint set about arranging for his sole daughter Kunver-bhai's marriage. It is this anecdote that forms the subject of the beautiful biographic poem, above referred to, written by Premanand Bhatt in the 17th century. The poem portrays in exquisite verse the gentleness and forbearance and the pure spiritual devotion of the Nagar Saint.

Narsi Mehta died at the age of sixty-six (1481 A. D.) He has left numerous poems in Guzerati, dealing with the life and doings of Krishna and full of true poetry and devotion. They have been characterized as being "simple and most charming." An idol to his memory has been set up at Junagadh and one to his daughter's at Dwaraka.

MIRA BAI

Mira Bai was the daughter of the Rajput noble, Ratan Singh (Rahtor) of Merata, a town between Bikanir and Jodhpur in Rajputana. She was born in 1504 A.D. From childhood, perhaps through the influence of her mother, she worshipped Krishna and vowed to devote her life to Him. She was however betrothed to Kanwar Bhoja Raja son of Rana Sanga of Mewar, in 1516 A.D.

"Bhoja Raja went in great state to Merata and took the bride home to Chittoor. Mira Bai, the fairest of Rajputris, became the highest lady in the land. And at first she was happy. Both she and her husband loved poetry and composed poems with extraordinary facility and they delighted in each other's talent. But there was a difference in their verses which grew more and more marked as time went on. Mira Bai's had but one theme—the love of God, sure salvation for all men. Bhoj Raja sang of fame and of glory, of eminence and dominion and of the pleasures of life.

At first Bhoja Raja allowed Mira Bai fullest liberty. Gradually she withdrew from the gaieties of the Court, left aside her silks and jewels, and wore only the severe ascetic robes. She refused all luxury and slept upon a deer-skin on the floor. She gathered her maids and taught them to sing her exquisite compositions, and her own matchless voice led them in song. Soon palace walls grew too narrow. Mira Bai would fain sing to the world. Where men and women congregated, there must she tell of God's love for all. At last she went to the temple of Shri Krishna, the messenger of Divine Love to the world, whose flute had charmed men's hearts and led them docile to the Beloved Feet.

In the temple Mira Bai sang herself into ecstasy and in her ecstasy danced till she fell in trance. When she recovered, she was changed; into her seemed to have passed the very heart of Love itself. She frequented the temple. The people flocked to hear her wonderful song; from the uttermost parts of Rajasthan, they came and crowded about the temple, listening fervently to Mira Bai's marvellous voice till, exalted beyond their wont, they vowed themselves to higher, better things. . . . .

For long, the Rana seems to have looked with disfavour on the conduct of his wife, her frequent attendance at temples and the company of saints. Once somebody remonstrated with Mira Bai saying 'You are come of a noble family. Be wise and desist from the company of begging devotees which casts a slur on our families.' Mira replied, 'The slur of thousand births departs on association with saints. The slur is on her who loves not their company.' Mira was at last banished to small and poor apartments in the palace, without attendants—but despite it all she was happy. The fact of her living irritated the King, he sent her poison. She drank it—in the name of God—and nothing happened. A golden casket was brought her, within it 'a necklace for the devotee.' She opened the

box; an angry snake sprang out and struck her again and yet again. Mira Bai calmly put the deadly creature about her neck—'a *mala* of *chandra* beads'—she called it. Then a curt message came asking Mira Bai to destroy herself, it was the King's decree—nor would he grant her an interview. 'I obey,' said Mira Bai simply.

It was the hour of her release. Fearing to give sorrow to those who loved her spite of the King's orders and kept as near as possible to their beloved Queen and spiritual teacher, Mira Bai arose in the dark of night and departed all alone. She came to a river and in order to carry out the cruel command, plunged into it. She thought to feel the cold waters envelop her and draw her into their silent depths and she fastened her mind upon the Lord whom she served. Mira Bai awoke only to find that she lay upon a river bank, but seemingly far from where she had flung herself in. The smiling plains of Brindavan spread before her; travelling across them, she reached Brindavan and there she decided to stay.

In Brindavan at this time lived Rup Gossain, disciple of Shri Chaitanya of Bengal, a well-known ascetic and devotee. He was profoundly learned, but he cherished two great prejudices. "Do you want salvation?" he

would ask, "then see neither women nor gold!" Mira soon heard of him and sent him a message. "Mira knows that in Brindavan there is but one man—Shri Krishna—many others live here, it is true, but as they all dwell in His love, they are all but the maids of Gokula." The holy man was pleased with the message and sent for Mira Bai. "My daughter," said Rup Gossain, "is there aught I may do for thee?" "Oh father," answered Mira, "permit that I dwell with thee in this temple and from thy lips learn the wisdom of God." And so it was. Some say that Rup Gossain was master and Mira disciple, and others the reverse. Perhaps each had something which the other lacked. Mira Bai did not cease to sing; her songs were caught up and handed on, and every village, wherever the Braj Bhasha was spoken, knew them and they echoed in stately palaces also. At last, it is said, the Rana, repenting of his deed, came and joined her, and they both thereafter lived in peace, residing half the year at Chittoor and half the year at Brindavan."*

The sources of this older Vaishnavism, represented by the lives and poems of Narsi Mehta and Mira Bai, are lost to us. They are clearly older than the sectarian schools of

* From *Tales of Indian Love and Beauty*. By Josephine Ransom.

Vaishnavism that grew up later, both in Western and Eastern India. Perhaps their lives caught the spark from the teachings of Nimbarka (14th century A. D.) who was the first to formulate the Vaishnavite Philosophy in Northern India and link it with a passionate adoration of Vishnu in the form of Krishna. Nimbarka and his successors had their headquarters at Muttra from whence the new teaching might have radiated both east and west. Or perhaps, though we for ourselves think that their connection to this early school of Vaishnavite teaching is highly probable, Narsi Mehta and Mira Bai were great poets, even as Vidyapathi and Chandi Das who preceded the great reformers in Bengal were, to whom the vision of the Beautiful Cowherd-God came earlier than to the rest of their mediæval countrymen. Whatever be the sources of their inspiration, their lives and poems gave rise to a pure and intense Vaishnavism which should have brought new faith and cheerfulness into the heart of the waning Rajput race.

It was on a ground thus prepared by the lives and poems of the two saints that the descendants of Vallabha, the subject of this sketch, established their more theologic and powerful Vaishnavism. Some may lament the change. The intense Vaishnavism built

upon the self-sacrifice and devotion of the early saints was to some extent reduced into a religion of theologic worship and priestly domination. A system of image worship and costly offerings substituted itself for the life of intense prayer and devotion and righteousnes which the older Vaishnavas had inculcated. But the newer Vaishnavism, spite of some loss in simplicity and faith, was not without its own achievements. It spread and conquered all classes of people in Rajasthan and Guzerat and brought them together in spiritual and social fellowship. The Rajput peasant and prince, the merchant and the noble, now mingled in one common adoration and cheerful faith. Into hearts inured to cruelty and warfare, it poured a new gentleness and humanity. Also at a time when their political fortunes were waning, the new Vaishnavism should have given them a fresh faith and cheer. Under the influence of this Vaishnavism, poetry and a new school of art arose, a parallel to which one could not find in the achievements of Vaishnavism in other provinces. The large body of mystic and beautiful poetry which this sect gave birth to in the Rajasthani and Western Hindi dialects has been the subject of much praise and admiration. Poems such as the *Satsayi* of Behari Lal, and the renderings of old classics

like the *Prem Sagar* of Chatturbhuj Misra, have been ranked as some of the most precious found in any Indian language. The great school of art which arose under the same Vaishnavite inspiration, till now remained unknown; but recently the labours of a devoted student of Indian art have given it world-wide celebrity. Alike in its qualities of treatment and its motifs, this mediæval Rajput painting has been considered to display as high and valuable an art as the early school of mediæval Italian painters.

VALLABHACHARYA (1479—1531 A.D.)

PARENTAGE AND FAMILY

Vallabhacharya, the founder of the great Vaishnavite Church of Rajasthan and Guzerat, was the second son of Lakshman Bhatt, a Telingana Brahmin. Lakshman Bhatt was descended from a Brahman nâmed Narayana Bhatt (fourth in direct descent from the latter), was a student of the Black Yajur Veda, and dwelt in a village called Kankarava in the Telugu country. Lakshmana Bhatt lived some where in the middle of the fifteenth century; the particulars of the exact period are not preserved. He seems to have believed that he had been promised by Krishna that he would have three sons, and that his second son would be an incarnation of God himself.

His wife's name was Elamagara, and the first son of the marriage was Ramakrishna.

VALLABHA'S BIRTH

After the birth of this child, Lakshmana Bhatt taking his family with him went on a pilgrimage by the route of Allahabad to Benares. He dwelt there for some time, but, a violent dispute having arisen in the city between the Mussulmans and the Hindu Sanyasis, which resulted in a bloody conflict, Lakshamana Bhatt, apprehensive of the safety of his family, fled away with them. In the course of their flight through the country they eventually arrived at a wild spot called Champaranya. The terror of the flight combined with the wild savageness of the country through which they were fleeing, had the effect upon Elamagara of accelerating labour, she being at the time pregnant with her second child; and in the midst of the lonely forest she gave birth to an eight-months' child, on Sunday, the eleventh day of the dark half of Vaisakha of the Vikrama year 1535—(1479 A. D.)

In a work called *Nijvarta*, dealing with holy lives belonging to the Vallabhachari sect, it is stated that, when Vallabha was born in Champaranya, a palace of gold sprang up on the spot, and the gods from the heavens showered down flowers, the kinnaras and the

gandharvas sang and gods themselves descended in their *vimans* to see the blessed child. Embarrassed perhaps by the circumstances of their flight or trusting to providential intervention to protect the child, the parents, it is said, forthwith abandoned it, placing it gently upon leaves in the shade of a widebranched tree. Still pursuing their flight, they arrived at a place called Chowdanagar, where, after residing some time, they received intelligence that quiet was completely restored at Benares, upon which they set out to return to that place, and taking intentionally the route by which they had come they speedily reached the spot where they had deserted their infant.

Here, to their astonishment, they beheld the little child alive and well, playing, it is said, in the midst of a sacrificial fire in a pit sunk on the spot. After some short repose and refreshment, the parents resumed their journey taking the child with them to Benares which they eventually reached. The name they gave the child was *Vadtrabha* which was afterwards changed into Vallabha. In the place of his birth, Champaranya, Vallabha's followers, prompted by zeal and love, have erected a temple on the spot of his nativity, which is still in existence. The

younger brother of Vallabha who was born some time after was named Kesava.

VALLABHA'S EDUCATION

When Vallabha had reached the age of six or seven years, he was placed for instruction under the tuition of Narayana Bhatta. It is not known whether Vallabha was sent to the native village in the Telugu country for instruction or had the same in the city of Benares itself. The Vallabhachari chronicle written in the Braj Bhasha tells us that Vallabha's rapidity of apprehension was so great and miraculous that in the short space of four months he succeeded in learning the whole of the four Vedas, the six Shastras and the eighteen Puranas. Whatever be the truth of this story, there is no doubt that Vallabha had acquired vast Sanskrit learning and that he had completely studied the various philosophic systems and sciences current in his day. Vallabha, on attaining his eleventh year, lost his father. The following year he took leave of his mother, and, bidding farewell to Gokul, the village of his residence on the left bank of the Jamna, a short distance from Mathura, he started on his pilgrimage to South India where his ancestors had originally lived.

VALLABHA'S PILGRIMAGES

Vallabha had perhaps by this time, though

he was young, pondered over and matured his scheme of Vaishnavite faith and philosophy, for we find him in his travels in the South preaching his religion and converting men or engaging in scholastic disputations with the learned. One of his early converts seems to have been the son of a rich and important man of some town in South India, whose name was Damodar Das. After his conversion, Damodar followed Vallabha in his travels and they both arrived at the city of Vijayanagar where the maternal parents of Vallabha resided. Krishna Deva Raya was the king at the time, to whose court he was introduced. It is recorded that Vallabha was invited to a philosophic disputation with the Saivites, followers of the Advaitic School, and the king, in whose court the disputation took place, was so pleased with Vallabha for the genius and learning displayed, that he bestowed upon him rich presents of gold and silver. A portion of these Vallabha devoted to the manufacture of a handsome golden waist-ornament with which to decorate the image of the deity in a temple of the city, and another portion he appropriated to the discharge of debts incurred by his father and left unpaid at his death. The fourth only of the presents did he reserve to himself to meet the possibility of his needs.

ELECTION AS A VAISHNAVA ACHARYA

The success in the disputation with the Smarta Brahmins was attended with a more remarkable result. We are told that the Vaishnavas of the locality, struck with Vallabha's attacks on the Saivite School, and finding in him a strong advocate of the Vaishnava religion and philosophy, proceeded to elect him as their spiritual chief with the title of Acharya. From this date, Vallabhacharya's fame and influence rapidly increased. His further travels are thus described by Wilson: "He travelled to Ujjain and took up his abode under a *pipal* tree, on the banks of the Sipra, which is said still to exist and designated as his baithak or station. Besides this, we find traces of him in other places. There is a baithak of his amongst the ghats of Muttra; and about two miles from the fort of Chunar is a place called 'his well,' *Acharji kund*, comprising a temple and *math* in the courtyard of which is the well in question. The saint is said to have resided here sometime." Vallabhacharya, then, returned to the North by way of Maharashtra and Rajasthan, perhaps preaching his religion in the cities where he stayed and making converts, even like the other great reformer and preacher of this epoch, Chaitanya, who lived in exactly the same period (1485—1533).

Alike in their vast learning and religious attainments, alike in the zeal with which they preached and spread the new Vaishnavite religion, these two bear a striking and historic parallel. Returning to Benares by way of Allahabad, Vallabhacharya remained there for some time, carrying on further studies in the new religion and philosophy. He started again on a second pilgrimage but this time to the ancient places of pilgrimage in the Himalayan valleys, Hardwar and Badri-Kedar. He returned after a period of nine years and settled in the groves of Brindavan, now more important to him with his Vaishnavite loves and gospel, than a mere place of sojourn which it was to his itinerant parents.

DISCOVERY AND INSTALLATION OF SHRI NATHJI

While living here amidst the classic groves engaged in Vaishnavite devotion and studies, surrounded also perhaps by the few disciples he had by this time gathered, it is said that God Krishna appeared to him one day in his sleep, told him that he had become manifest in the Govardhana Hill under the name of Devadamana or Shri Nathji, and that his attendants at the cow settlement when he became incarnate as Krishna had been born again, and added that Vallabha should come to see Him. Accordingly Vallabha and his

disciples went, found an image of Devadamana or Shri Nathji and, duly constructing a temple, installed the image therein. Shri Nathji, it is said, further commanded Vallabha to propagate His worship, without which a man would not be admissible to the Pustimarga or the path of Divine Grace. "The meaning of this legend seems to be," as Sir Bhandarkar suggests, "that Vallabha connected his system with a special manifestation of Krishna known by the name of Shri Nathji."

This incident seems to have made a profound impression upon the followers of Vallabhacharya, for, in later times when his teachings had spread over Rajasthan, we find that it is one of the great themes with which the art and poetry of the country are preoccupied. In the collection of Rajput paintings, recently published by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, a most beautiful painting portrays this historic event. In a back-ground all covered with hills, representing Brindavana, Vallabhacharya is seen installing the image in the Govardhana Hill. Below on the left are two disciples, perhaps Telingana Brahmins, in attitudes of devotion, and a servant with a bale of offerings for the new shrine. On the right are two Princes of Udaipur, of whom the foremost is no doubt Raj Singh, and two

Gopis, or perhaps Princesses, with offerings of milk and curd. The foreground is occupied on the right and left by villages (with a temple on the right) and two bathing tanks in the centre; one of the latter is surrounded by little *chatris* or stone pavilions. "The most beautiful figure is that of the foremost Brahman, a true *bhakta*, whose eyes are closed and hands outstretched in fervent adoration." The date of this event, the installation of Shri Nathji, is usually given as Samvat 1576 or A.D. 1520.

VALLABHA'S MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Shortly before or after this event, Vallabhacharya married at Benares a Brahmin girl by name Maha Lakshmi. Vallabhacharya, like the other reforming Vaishnavas of the day, seems to have taught that marriage and family were no hindrance to religious life and set an example in himself. Two sons were born of this marriage; the first named Gopinatha being born in 1511 A.D. (Samvat 1567) and the second Vittalnathji born in 1516 A.D., (Samvat 1572) in the village of Parvat. Vallabhacharya himself educated both his sons thus fitting them for their work as his successors in preaching the Vaishnavite cult.

AT BENARES

Vallabhacharya seems to have divided his time between Benares and Brindavan partly

residing at one place and partly at another. At first his Vaishnavite gospel could have found little following in the city of Benares, seat of Saivism as it was and of Advaitic learning. But Vallabhacharya seems to have little feared the learned men of the city ; for a remarkable anecdote is told of how, in one of his earlier visits to that city, he posted on the walls of a temple a challenge to a disputation. The invitation, it is said, was responded to especially by the followers of Sankaracharya, and Vallabha's chronicles add that they were all defeated. It is evident that he derived considerable repute from this occurrence ; and it is most likely that a man of such renown, so prominent and esteemed for his great sanctity and knowledge, should often be led to enter into philosophic and theological disputations with learned men of same or rival faiths in Benares and other seats of learning. We read in the life of Chaitanya, written almost contemporarily, that coming to Benares at about the same time when Vallabha was engaged in his disputations, the Bengali preacher entered into a great disputation with one Parekshanand, a famous Advaitic scholar, and converted him to his Vaishnavite cult.

HIS LAST YEARS

Vallabhacharya spent the last years

of his life at Benares, surrounded by his family and disciples and composing the numerous works which now bear his name and are the chief authority of his sect. In writing these works, mostly commentaries and short philosophical or devotional treatises, Vallabhacharya seems to have been aided by some scholars, perhaps his disciples. These works embody Vallabhacharya's special version of the Vaishnavite Philosophy and his notions of worship and spiritual training. His cult and doctrines resemble a great deal those of the contemporary Chaitanya. The chief works of Vallabha are the following: a few of them are too small and a few including Vyasa and Jaimini Sutra Bhashyas are not perhaps extant.

1. *Vyasa Sutra Bhashya.*
2. *Jaimini Sutra Bhashya.*
3. *Bhagavatha Tika Subhodhini.*
4. *Pushti Pravaha Maryada.*
5. *Siddhanta Rahasya.*

   (All these are in Sanskrit).

6. *Antahkarna Prabodha.*
7. *Nava Ratna.*
8. *Krishna Ashraya.*
9. *Bhakti Vardini,* and a few others.
10. *Vishnu Padas.*

    (All these are in the Braj Bhasha).

Among these the most important works

are the *Subhodhini*, a commentary embodying great learning on the first four *adhyayas* of the 10th Skandha of the Bhagavatha Purana, and *Siddhanta Rahasya* embodying the principles and doctrines of the Sect.

From the time when Vallabhacharya began to preach his creed, he had made eighty-four devoted disciples. The lives of Vallabha and these Chorasi Vaishnavas are given in a large work entitled *Vartha* or *Bartha* in Western Hindi. Wilson characterises the chronicle as "being full of marvellous and insipid anecdotes"; there can be no doubt that they are much inferior to the full and accurate lives of Chaitanya and his disciples which were written by some of his gifted followers like Damodar and Krishna Das. It may be mentioned that the Hindi *Bhakta Mal* written by Nabhaji Das also contains some account of Vallabha and his followers.

HIS DEATH

At the age of fifty-two, Vallabha closed his days in the city of Benares. Most legendary accounts, as usual, are given of this event. It is said that, having accomplished his mission, he entered the Ganges at Hanuman Ghat and, when stooping into the water, passed out of sight; a brilliant flame arose from the spot

and in the presence of a host of spectators he ascended to Heaven and was lost in the firmament. The last place where he made his dwelling is said to be Jethan Bir at Benares near which a *math* still subsists.

VALLABHACHARYA'S SUCCESSORS AND THEIR WORK

On the death of Vallabhacharya, a dispute ensued between his two sons, Gopinath and Vittalnath, with regard to the succession to his *gadi* or position as a Teacher; and it appears the dispute was decided by the intervention of the king of Delhi in favour of the eldest son, Gopinatha. Gopinatha however dying immediately together with his son, Vittalnath became the sole representative of Vallabhacharya. Vittalnath (1516—1576) is represented as an able successor of his father, having made, it is said, two hundred and fifty-two devoted converts to the new creed, whose history is narrated in a big work like the *Vartha*. He made long journeys, visiting Mathura and Gokul in the province of Agra; he next went to Dwarka; from Dwarka he proceeded to Cutch and the countries of Malwa and Mewar, making proselytes everywhere. He thence turned southward to Pandharpur in the province of Bijapur. During his journeys in central Rajas-

than and elsewhere, he made numerous converts among the Baniyas or bankers, the Bhattias and the Kunbis or the cultivators, the Sutaras or cultivators and the Lowars or blacksmiths; a few Brahmans also became his followers as well as some Mussulmans. Vittalnath seems to have preached equality among his followers.

Vittalnath went in Samwat 1621 (1565 A.D.) to Gokul, on the banks of the Jamna, with the determination of spending the rest of his days there. After residing at Gokul for some time, he gave up his intention and removed to Mathura on the opposite bank of the Jamna. But even at Mathura he did not stay long, for, it is said, he visited Guzerat six times during his life. Anyhow after having made a number of journeys into Rajasthan and Guzerat prompted by proselytizing zeal, Vittalnath seems to have finally settled at Gokul, and thereby acquired the name of Gokul Gosainji—a name which has been perpetuated in all his male descendants. Vittalnath wrote several works of repute, specially commentaries. In one of his works, the *Vidvan Mandan*, he has severely criticised the sect and doctrines of Sankaracharya. He died at the ripe age of seventy years on the sacred hill of Govardhana in Gokul where his father had set up the image of Shri Nathji.

VITTALNATH'S SONS

Vittalnath was twice married, the name of his first wife being Rukmini and that of the second being Padmavati. By these wives he had seven sons and four daughters. The names of the sons in the order of their birth are : Girdharji, Govinda Ray, Balakrishnaji, Gokulnathji, Raghunathji, Jadunathji, Ghanashyamji.

All these seven sons, upon the death of Vittalnathji, became widely dispersed throughout Western India—Rajasthan and Guzerat—and each of them established his own *gadi* or seat of teaching. They gave the Vaishnavite cult wide diffusion and made increasing proselytes.

Gokulnathji (1552—1610), the fourth, became however the most celebrated of the seven. He wrote a number of commentaries on the works of his grandfather, the *Siddhanta Rahasya* and others. He is said to have been highly ambitious and to have given a sad and idolatrous turn to the doctrines of the sect. His descendants to-day keep themselves separate from those of his brothers considering themselves as the only legitimate teachers or Gossains of the Faith. It was about the period of this dispersion of the sons of Vittalnathji that it is presumed that they acquired the title of *Maharaj* which effectually

conveys in its significance and meaning the full force of the wide sway and influence of Vallabha's descendants. There are other titles too, such as Gossain (Lord of Cows) or Goswami, Vallabhakula, Acharya, Guru, Prabhu, etc.

The followers of this sect have greatly increased since the times of Vittalnath and comprise the entire population of Cutch, Kathiawar, Rajasthan and Malwa. The wealthy merchants and bankers and the princes are devoted votaries. The Maharajahs or the descendants of Vallabha have increased proportionately and they now number some sixty or seventy, widely dispersed throughout the countries above mentioned and in possession of rich *maths* and shrines. Of these, it is said, only two or three have any knowledge of Sanskrit and the rest are grossly ignorant and lead lives of luxurious peace. Of the descendants of Vallabha who flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries, during which time the religion was firmly established throughout Rajasthan and Guzerat and various *mandirs* and *maths* were erected, we have no available accounts. The story and character of two principal Gossains who flourished in the respective capitals of Mewar and Marwar in the beginning of the 19th century are however preserved to us in the pages of Tod's

Rajasthan and throw interesting light on the type of men that at about this time were occupying the Vaishnavite *gadis* in the various parts of Western India. The first belongs to a scheming worldly type not uncommon in the religious history of the world.

"When suicide was the sole alternative to avoid surrender to the fangs of this Herod of the Desert, the high priest (Deonath) assuming the mantle of prophecy pronounced that no capitulation was inscribed in the book of Fate whose page revealed brighter days for young Maun. Such prophets are dangerous about the persons of princes, who seldom fail to find the means to prevent their oracles from being demented. . . . .
Deonath was a striking example of the identity of human nature, under whatever garb and in whatever clime, whether under the cowl or the coronet, in the cold clime of Europe or the deserts of India. This Wolsey of Marwadis exercised his hourly-increasing power to the disgust and alienation of all but his infatuated prince. He leagued with the nominal minister, Induraj, and together they governed the prince and country. Such characters, when exceeding the sphere of their duties, expose religion to contempt."

The second is more amiable and respectable.

"The present pontiff Damodara is the lineal

descendant (of Vallabhacharya); and whether in addressing him verbally or by letter, is styled Maharajah or 'great Prince'. As the supreme head of the Vishnu sect, his person is held to be *ansa* or a 'portion of the divinity.' The pontiff is now about thirty years of age. He is of a benign aspect, with much dignity of demeanour, courteous, yet exacting the homage due to his calling; meek as becomes the priest of Govinda, but with the finished manners of one accustomed to the first society. His features are finely moulded and his complexion good. He is about the middle size, though as he rises to no mortal, I could not exactly judge of his height. When I saw him he had only one daughter to whom he is much attached. He has but one wife nor does Krishna allow polygamy to his priest. In times of danger, like some of his prototypes in the dark ages of Europe, he poised the lance and found it more effective than spiritual anathemas against those who would first adore the God and then plunder him. Such were the Mahratha chiefs, Jeswant Rao Holkar and Bapoo Sindia. Damodara accordingly made the tour of his extensive diocese at the head of four hundred horses, two standards of foot and two field pieces. He rode the finest mares in the country; laid aside his pontificals for the

quilted *dugla*, and was summoned to his matins by the kettledrum instead of the bell and cymbal. In this he only imitated Krishna who often mixed in the ranks of battle and dyed his saffron robe in the red-stained field. But notwithstanding this display of martial principle which covered with a helmet the shaven crown, his conduct and character are amiable and unexceptionable, and he furnishes a striking contrast to the late head of the Vishnu establishments in Marwar, who commenced with the care of his master's conscience and ended with that of the state; meek and unassuming till he added temporal to spiritual power, which developed unlimited pride, with all the qualities that too often wait on ' a little brief authority ' and to the display of which he fell a victim."

VALLABHA'S RELIGION AND TEACHING

Before we deal with the progress of the sect and its influence on the character and worship of the people, we shall study a little the religious creed which Vallabha and his successors propounded. It was a religion addressed to the worship of Vishnu in the form of Krishna, and in its doctrinal aspects was derived chiefly, like the system of Chaitanya, from the Vaishnavite Philosophy propounded by Ramanuja. Centred round the conception of a Personal and Beneficent God

(who is *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*), it laid great emphasis on *Pushti* (Grace) and *Bhakthi* (Devotion) and has left a body of literature in Sanskrit and vernacular to some extent greater than that of the Chaitanyite sect itself. The following is an authoritative exposition of the tenets of Vallabha, based upon the works of the sect, from the pen of Sir Bhandarkar.

"Vallabha's Vedantic theory is the same as that of an earlier author of the name of Vishnuswamin. This Vishnuswamin is said to have been the son of the councillor of a Dravida Chief dependent on the Emperor of Delhi.

The Vedantic theory of Vishnuswamin is as follows: The one primeval soul was not joyful because he was alone (B. U.), and, desiring to be many, he himself became the inanimate world, the individual soul, and the inward controlling soul. These sprang from him like sparks from a burning fire and are his parts (M. U.) By his own inscrutable power he rendered the properties of intelligence and joy imperceptible in the first, and his joy alone in the second, while the third has all the attributes perceptible in it. Simple Brahman as such has perceptible joy prevailing in it.

The following particulars have been gleaned from two works belonging to the Vallabha-

charya Sect (*Suddhadvaita martanda* by Giridhara and *Prameyaratnarnava* by Balakrishna Bhatta, Chowkamba Sanskrit Series).

The whole world has Brahman for its material cause. The perception of forms apparently different from the *Brahman* is due to ignorance or delusion and to the true nature of the Brahman being rendered imperceptible. The individual soul is identical with Brahman, a part of Brahman and atomic. From the Aksara composed of existence, intelligence and joy (Sacchidananda) particles come out as sparks from fire. From the predominance of the *sat* portion in them the *joy* portion is concealed, and thus we have individual souls possessing *sat*, existence and *cit*, intelligence. The individual soul is not a form of the supreme Soul altered by a third thing being involved in it, such as the Maya (Illusive Power), but is itself the same substance as the Supreme Soul with one attribute rendered imperceptible. The relation between the two is thus that of identity (Advaita), both being in the pristine unchanged form, *i.e.*, identity of untransformed souls (Suddhadvaita).

The individual soul is of two kinds: (1) going through the circle of existences, and (2) delivered from the trammels of life. The first is subject to misery in consequence of his delusion that his body and his senses are his soul

He remains in this condition till he acquires knowledge, sees the vanity of the world, devotes himself to meditation and the love of God, when he is delivered. The delivered souls are: (i) those who have become so, while in their previous condition, by the termination of ignorance or delusion, such as Sanaka and others; and (ii) those who dwell in the world of the Bhagavat, other than the pervading Vaikuntha, where they attain the condition of the pure Brahman by the favour of the Bhagavat; (iii) there are others, who, having the divine nature in them and coming in contact with good men, resort to various ways of Bhakti, or the propitiation of God, until perfect love alone for Him comes to dwell in their heart, and finally become the associates of the Bhagavat in his eternal sports and amusements. This last is the highest Moksa or deliverance. The souls who have the divine nature in them are of two kinds: (1) those who subject themselves to certain moral discipline (Maryada Jiva) and (2) those who depend entirely on God's Grace (Pusti Jiva). Both attain final deliverance, but there is a difference which corresponds to that between (ii) and (iii) above and which will be further explained below.

Sri Krishna is the highest Brahman. He has hands and feet not made of ordinary matter

(Aprakta), but celestial. His body consists of Sat, existence; Cit, intelligence; Ananda, joy. He is called Purusottama, as the most excellent of all beings, and has all attributes which are not ordinary but celestial. All his sports are eternal. He with his four arms or two arms sports with his various devotees or Bhakthas, in the extensive Vaikuntha, which contains Vrindavana with its large forests. Krishna is therefore the highest Joy (Paramananda). By his will his Sattva portion overcomes the Ananda or joy portion and, becoming Aksara or unchangeable, he is the cause of all causes, and creates the world. Then Aksara Brahman is of two kinds: (1) that which is recognised by the devotees as the place of Purusottama, which has the attributes of the extensive Vaikuntha and others; (2) to the enlightened it appears in the form of Existence, Intelligence and Joy, infinite in time and space, self-manifesting and devoid of all qualities. Therefore in the form in which the enlightened see it, all the positive qualities are hidden or rendered imperceptible by the inscrutable power referred to above, and therefore they are not to be regarded as non-existing. When Brahman is spoken of as devoid of all qualities, what is meant is just this. There are thus three forms of the Supreme Being,

Purusottama and the two kinds of the Unchangeable here mentioned. To explain the controlling of all by Purusottama, that form of his that dwells in the sun, the gods, the earth, etc., is called Antaryamin (the inward controller). It is this inward controller that becomes incarnate in the various forms usually mentioned. The celestial or Sattva quality of Krishna becomes Vishnu, and in this form he becomes the Protector of all. Similarly the qualities of Rajas and Tamas assume the forms of Brahmadeva and Siva for discharging the functions of creation and destruction.

Pusti is the grace (Anugraha) of God which is to be inferred from its fruit or the results, which are ordinary, or of this world, and extraordinary, or of the next world. Mahapusti or the highest grace is that which removes great obstacles and conduces to the attainment of God himself. Pusti enables one to attain the four objects of life. Extraordinary, or special Pusti, conduces to Bhakti, which leads to the attainment of God. The Bhakti or devotion, generated by this special grace, is called Pusti bhakti. The frame of mind generated by this kind of devotion is the desire of the attainment of God to the exclusion of everything else. This Pusti bhakti is of four kinds : (1) Pravaha

Pustibhakti ; (2) Maryada Pustibhakti, (3) Pusti-Pustibhakti, (4) Suddha-Pustibhakti. The first is the path of those who, while engaged in a worldly life with its *me* and *mine*, which is compared to a stream (Pravaha), do acts calculated to bring about the attainment of God. The second is of those who, withdrawing their minds from worldly enjoyments, devote themselves to God by hearing discourses about him, singing his name, and such other processes. The third is of those who already enjoying God's grace are made by another grace competent to acquire knowledge useful for adoration ; and thus they come to know all about the ways of God. The followers of this path have to depend on their own efforts for the acquisition of knowledge referred to. The fourth is of those who through mere love devote themselves to the singing and praising of God as if it were a haunting passion. This Bhakti is generated by God himself and does not depend on man's will as the third, mentioned above, does. First a liking for himself is generated by God in the mind of a man to whom His grace extends. Then a man sets about acquiring knowledge about God, and all this is called Premabhakti (love—adoration). Now the stages in the development of this are as follows :

(1) Love or liking (Preman), (2) Attachment or addictedness (Asakti), (3) a haunting passion which is the mature condition of the first two (Vyasana). The haunting passion leads to the attainment of the end, that is, the highest bliss. Those in whom Bhakti has attained to this pitch reject with scorn the four kinds of Mukti and choose the eternal service of Hari, as noticed in the section on the Pancaratra system. By the haunting passion about Hari he is seen everywhere, and therefore everything becomes an object of love, and the devotee identifies himself with everything. Then the inner and the outer world is, for the devotee, full of Purusottama, or the highest soul. The final fruit of this devotion is admission to the eternal sports of Krishna. The Bhaktas join in these sports, assuming the forms of cows, beasts, birds, trees, rivers, etc., and enjoy the company of Purusottama which confers boundless joy. These external sports are like those which Krishna went through when he became incarnate in Vraja and Vrindavana. Some of the devotees become in the celestial Vrindavana Gopas and Gopis and join in the sports. The Maryada bhaktas attain Mukti, called Sayujya, which consists in being one with Hari. The Pustibhaktas reject it with scorn and seek for participation in the sports of Hari."

THE PROGRESS OF THE SECT

We have already described to some extent the progress of the sect in treating of the descĕndants of Vallabha and their work. How the Vallabhaites came to have *gadis* and *mandirs* in the various cities of Rajasthan and Guzerat, how their influence arose and extended, will be best seen in the following account of the Nathdwar shrine, taken from Tod. The description also contains an account of the views and worship of the votaries and of the large bounties and gifts they made unto their deity.

"When Aurangazeb proscribed Krishna and rendered his shrines impure throughout Vrij, Rana Raj Sing 'offered the heads of one hundred thousand Rajputs for his service,' and the God was conducted by the route of Kotah and Rampoora to Mewar. An omen decided the spot of his residence.

Here no blood-stained sacrifice scares the timid devotee; no austerities terrify or tedious ceremonies fatigue him; he is taught to cherish the hope that he has only to ask for mercy in order to obtain it; and to believe that the compassionate Deity who guarded the lapwings' nest in the midst of myriads of combatants, who gave beatitude to the courtesan who as the wall crushed her pronounced the name of Rama, will not withold it from

him who has quitted the world and its allurements that he may live only in His Presence, be fed by the food prepared for Himself and yield up his last sigh invoking the name of Hari. There have been two hundred individuals at a time, many of whom, stipulating merely for food, raiment and funeral rites, have abandoned all to pass their days in devotion at the shrine; men of every condition, Rajpoot, merchant, and mechanic; and where sincerity of devotion is the sole expiation, and gifts outweigh penance, they must feel the road smooth to the haven of hope.

There is no donation too great or too trifling for the acceptance of Krishna from the baronial estate to a patch of meadow land; from the gemmed coronet to adorn His image to the widow's mite; nor, as before observed, is there a principality in India which does not diminish its fisc to add to his revenues.

It has been mentioned that the lands of Mewar appropriated to the Shrine are equal in value to a baronial appenage, and, as before observed, there is not a principality in India which does not assign a portion of its domain or revenue to this object. The Hara Princes of Kotah and Boondi are almost exclusive worshippers of Kaniya. Everything at Kotah appertains to Kaniya. The Prince has but the usufruct of the palace, for

which £ 12,000 are annually transmitted to the Shrine. The grand lake, east of the town, with all its finny tenants, is under his especial protection, and the extensive suburb adjoining with its rents, lands and transit duties, belong to the god. Zalim Singh moreover transmits to the high priest the most valuable shawls, broadcloths and horses. His favourite son also, a child of love, is called Govardhan Das, the 'slave of Govardhan,' one of the many titles of Kaniya. The Prince of Marwar went mad from the murder of the high priest of Jalindra. The Raja of Shivapur, the 'Slave of Radha' (such was the name of this prince) almost lived in the temple and danced before the statue."

There were however two features in the Vaishnavite religion thus established, which in course of time became fruitful of evil. The one was the excessive resort to mythologic worship which in the end grew into sheer idolatry, and the other, an absolute insistence on reverence to the Guru which led to very dangerous consequences. The cult of a Personal God was the greatest gift that Vaishnavism gave to Mediæval India; but the Vallabhites, by elaborating a vast and idolatrous scheme of temple and image worship, sadly fell away from the teachings of the original reformers. The necessity of a pure

and virtuous life, of high ethics, and of a real culture of the heart was lost sight of and in their place came a showy and meaningless worship of images and men. The other doctrine, that of implicit reverence to the *guru* represented in Rajasthan in latter days by a number of ignorant and uncultured men led to most serious results. It was thought that in order to attain salvation one should literally sacrifice body, wealth and all to the Guru. The corruption this led drew admonition in a Sanskrit drama entitled *Pakhanda Dharma Khandana* (The Smashing of Heretical Religion) written about A. D. 1639, about a hundred years after the death of Vallabha.

"The *Sutradhara* says to the *Nati*—'O Dear, the Vedas have fled somewhere; no one knows the story of their flight. The Sankhya and the Yoga systems, the Puranas and the Smritis—they all have sunk into the bowels of the earth. Now young damsels look to the self-dedication (*Atma-nivedanam*) preached by Shrimat Vallabha Vittaleswara who has conspired to ruin the meaning of the Vedas.'

Enters a Vaishnava, wearing round his neck, in his ears, hand, head and round his waist, garlands of *tulsi*, and adorned with the mark of *Gopichandan* in his forehead. He

constantly utters 'Radha' 'Krishna'; with heart turned away from the Vedas and the scriptures, he rebukes the religious. He finds at every step crowds of women filled with *kama*. He goes about kissing the female Vaishnava.

Ye Vaishnavas, Ye Vaishnavas, hear the excellent Vaishnava doctrine—the embracing and clasping with the arms the large-eyed damsels, good drinking and eating, making no distinction between your own and another's, offering one's self and life to the guru, he is in the world the cause of salvation. Mutual dining, dalliance with women during night and day, and forming endless friendships—these are the surpassing beautiful doings of those who have consecrated their souls to Shri Gokulesha. Charity, devotion, meditation, the Vedas and a crore of sacrifices—they are nothing. The chief religion of the worshippers of Vallabha is the offering of one's son, daughter and wife—not the worship of Brahmins learned in the Vedas, not the observance of hospitality, the *Shraddhas* and the *Vratas*."

For effects such as these, one can have nothing but severe condemnation. But we have reasons to think that such evil effects were not always there; nor did they remain unchallenged. We may set against this the esti-

mate given by Tod, the sole and sympathetic historian of the Rajputs. "The predominance of the mild doctrines of Kaniya over the dark rites of Siva is doubtless beneficial to Rajput society. Were the prevention of female immolation the sole good resulting from their prevalence, that alone would conciliate our partiality; a real worshipper of Vishnu should forbid his wife following him to the pyre, as did recently the Boondi prince. In fact their tenderness to animal life is carried nearly to as great an excess as with the Jains who shed no blood. Celibacy is not imposed upon the priests of Kaniya, as upon those of Siva; on the contrary they are enjoined to marry, and the priestly office is hereditary by descent. They inculcate mercy towards all beings; though whether this feeling influences the mass must depend on the soil which receives the seed. I have often smiled at the incessant aspirations of the Macchiavelli of Rajasthan, Zalim Singh, who, while he ejaculated the name of the god as he told his beads, was inwardly absorbed by the mundane affairs; and when one word would have prevented civil war and saved his reputation from the stain of disloyalty to his prince, he was, to use his own words, at four score years and upwards, laying the foundation for another century of life. And thus it is with

the Prince of Marwar. But fortunately the princely worshippers of Kaniya are few in number ; *it is to the sons of commerce we must look for the effects of these doctrines ; and it is my pride and duty to declare that I have known men of both sects, Vishnu and Jain, whose integrity was spotless, and whose philanthropy was unbounded."*

RAJASTHANI ART AND POETRY

The great and lasting influence of the noble Vaishnavism taught by Vallabha and his descendants is chiefly to be seen in the arts and poetry of Rajasthan and of Guzerat. We have already adverted to them; but here at the close we propose to go into them with a little detail.

VERNACULAR POETRY

As in other provinces, the religious revival brought about a literary revival whose effects were visible even so late as the last century. The chief works, as all Vaishnavite works in that mediæval age were, are chiefly of a mystic or humanitarian character. They may be divided into two classes, those essentially mystic or theological, like the several treatises by the Gossains and their disciples, and those of a purely literary character like the works of Kesavalal and Jaswant Singh which however bear evidence of Vaishnavite thought and inspiration.

The works of the first group are not of high literary or artistic merit; often they are mainly intended to confirm and extend the influence of the Gossains. The same however cannot be said of the devotional treatises and poems and renderings of old Vaishnavite classics which belong to this class. These, like the poems of Sur Das or the *Prem Sagar* of Chatturbhuj Misr, have attracted more than local repute. The poems of Sur Das, alike in their diction and high mystical feeling, have been to Western Hindi what the poems of Kabir and Tulsi Das have been to Eastern Hindi. The *Prem Sagar*, though professedly a rendering in Hindi verse of the 10th Skandha of the Bhagavata, is fraught with exquisite poetry and discovers in its simple narration a deep spirit of humanity and love and a mystical and tender devotion to God.

The second class comprises works of a purely literary character, chiefly treatises on Rhetoric. Though didactic in character, they contain numerous beautiful songs, composed by way of illustration, wrought with Vaishnavite love and mysticism. In the poems dealing with the moods of various *Nayikas* in Kesava Lal's *Rasikapriya*, one finds strange notes of Vaishnavite longing and reverie. Behari Lal's *Sat Sayi* is another, a collection

of 700 verses said to have been composed to illustrate the forms and rules of metre. A learned critic has said that "it is one of the daintiest pieces of art in any Indian language. Bound by the rules of metre, each verse had a limit of forty-six syllables and sometimes contained less. Nevertheless each was a complete picture in itself. Some pictures of Krishna's wooing and the timid bride are charmingly graceful."

RAJPUT PAINTINGS

Greater than Rajput poetry was Rajput art, which, divided into two schools, that of the Hill valleys and that of the cities of Rajasthan, flourished with increasing beauty and power as long as the Vaishnavite inspiration lasted. We have already referred to a monumental study of the art recently given to the world by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy and the following remarks are based on the same.

The Rajput art, Kangra and Rajasthani alike, is essentially Vaishnavite in character. Its themes are the same as those of contemporary Rajput poetry and religion; both are preoccupied with the same sense of a Kind and Beauteous God, with the same eager longing and mystical devotion, with the same delight in Nature and pure things. The painters deal

in wonderful line and colour with the same anecdotes and legends—the Ras Lila, the Playing on the Flute, the loves of Radha, the quelling of the Kaliya—which the profound poetry and religion of the times were already interpreting in terms of mystic love and faith. But the paintings however are no mere translations in colour and line of the Vaishnavite legends but in themselves contain new revelations of Vaishnavite feeling. Resembling a great deal the mediæval Italian art that interpreted the Catholic religion, the Rajput art is however less individualistic and more visionary and ardent.

Of the two schools, the paintings of the Rajasthani School proper have not been as profusely illustrated in the book before us, as those of the Kangra and Jammu School. But one or two of the great masterpieces are there to testify to the sublimity and mysticism of this art. Plate IX in the book, containing a Head of Krishna, is taken from a fuller piece which is found in the same author's *Indian Drawings.* In that piece, Krishna, filled with a great ecstasy and beauty, dances in the midst of the *gopis* who play on musical instruments. The motif represented is the great *Ras-lila* with its strange burden of mystical love and union. *Ras-lila*, it has been said, " is based upon undying and eternal

truths, upon the permanent relations between Jiva and Iswara."

The paintings of the Hill valleys of Kangra and Jammu districts are more profuse and display a great mystical refinement and tenderness. The physical type embodied in them is also very charming. The earlier paintings dating from the later half of the 17th century, are characterised by a certain naivete and freshness—marks of true folk-art. Krishna moves in the scenes represented, a handsome youth, the beloved of Radha and the adoration of women. The paintings are fraught with the fragrance of flowers and the deep shade of summer woods. Intense passion and delight are there; there are great moods of ecstasy and devotion. Radha waiting in the woods, half doubting whether Krishna loves her, is the most typical motif. (Plates XXXVIII and XXXIX). But often more mystical moods are struck; Radha gently places her hand on Krishna, and, half tremour and half joy, offers him a lotus. (Plate XLIII). Or when the monsoon winds suddenly blow and the rains do fall, they both, lover and beloved, stand together under the covering of a blanket (Plate LVII). Here are exquisite movements of ardour and love, of mystic union and faith. But as the art progresses, as spiritual reverie gains in intensity, all yearning and

longing are submerged ; the consciousness of a new Beauty and a new Presence alone survives. Krishna stands forth as the Divine Presence, the great celestial Beauty communicating its quality to the very woods and flowers, suffusing the sky, land, men and women with its own music. The *Krishna Dhudadhari* (Plate LI) is the masterpiece of this art. Krishna shines the very embodiment of Divine Love and Beauty ; his companions too are beautiful ; and the very cows and the women peeping from the windows breathe the same music. Paintings like these, in the words of Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, " have for us this lesson that what we cannot discover at home and in the familiar events, we cannot discover anywhere. The Holy Land is the land of our own experience. All is in all and if beauty is not apparent to us in the well-known, we shall not find it in things that are strange and far away."

Surely then a religion which could inspire such tender and imaginative poetry—which could give rise to such a beautiful and visionary art—could not have been base or idolatrous.

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